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# BULLETIN OF THE AMERICAN ART-UNION.



NEW-YORK, SEPTEMBER 1, 1851.

## THE ILLUSTRATIONS.

The etching this month is by ALFRED JONES, after a picture which was one of the chief ornaments of the late exhibition of the National Academy of Design—*Murray's Defence of Toleration*, by P. F. ROTHERMEL. This work, we are happy to say, has become the property of the American Art Union. It illustrates the following extract from Sir Walter Scott's *History of Scotland*.

"But when, on the Sunday after Mary's landing, preparations were made to say mass in the royal chapel, the reformers said to each other, 'Shall that idol, the mass, again take place within this kingdom? It shall not.' The young master of Lindsay, showing in youth the fierceness of spirit which animated him in after life, called out in the court-yard of the royal palace, that the idolatrous priest should die the death according to God's law. The Prior of St. Andrews (afterwards Earl Murray) with great difficulty appeased the tumult, and protected the priests, whose blood would otherwise have mingled with their sacrifice. But unwilling to avow an intention so popular, he was obliged to dissemble with the reformers; and while he allowed that he stood with his sword drawn, at the door of the chapel, he pretended that he did not do so to protect the priest, but to prevent any Scottish man from entering to witness or partake in the idolatrous ceremony."

One of the wood-cuts, *The Scouting Party*, is engraved by RICHARDSON, after a characteristic picture by RANNEY, which is also the property of the Art Union. It represents a party of Western pioneers, with their horses upon a high bluff, watching the motions of their Indian enemies, whose fires are seen in the prairie below. The drawing on the block was made by MILLER.

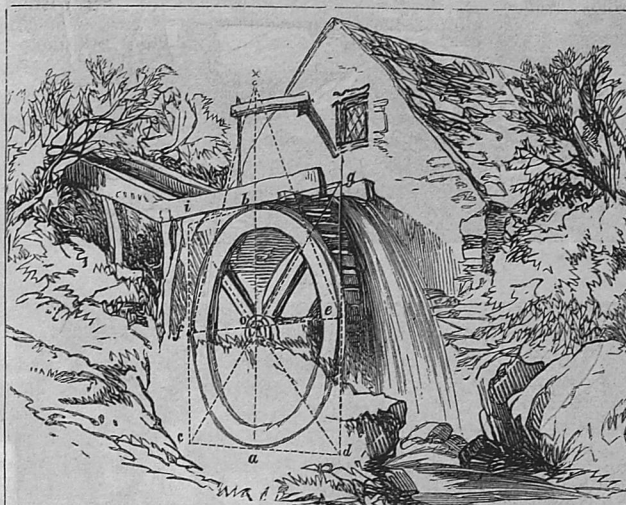
The other wood-cut is by BOBBETT & EDWARDS, after an original design drawn on the wood for the Bulletin, by T. F. HOPPIN. It is called *The Emigrant's Last Look upon Home*. The time is the morning of the departure. The party have reached on their journey the top of a hill, from which they must take their last look at the place they are leaving. The scene is well described in the following Sonnet by Rev. James M. Hoppin:

"Now bright beneath them gleamed the sunlit vale,  
And just discerned, the cot from whence they passed,  
When stayed the creaking wheels, and slow and pale  
Stepp'd forth the sorrowing emigrants, to cast  
Upon the home they left, one gaze,—the last:  
The grandsire shaded with his trembling hand  
The dim eye, strained upon the roof he reared;  
The son but looked, and bowed himself, unmanned,  
Upon his horse's neck, whose rough breast shared  
His master's agony:—unlike the rest  
The wife gazed tearless, and her infant son  
Folded in silence to her tranquil breast,  
As though she felt wherever doomed to roam,  
With him and with his sire—there would be home."

## THE ART OF SKETCHING FROM NATURE. (Concluded from the last Number.) CIRCULAR OBJECTS.

Among the circular objects which may, in the course of experience, present themselves to the sketcher, perhaps few would cause him more embarrassment in their delineation than a mill-wheel; which, when viewed obliquely (and it is seldom represented otherwise), presents an elliptical or oval form. The drawing, however, of this object will be readily effected by the application of the foregoing rules.

FIG. 23.



Let  $ao b$  be the vertical diameter of the wheel—then, according to the preceding rules, draw the right lines  $cad$ ,  $foe$ , and  $ibg$ . Draw  $deg$  parallel to  $ab$ ; and at a distance from it equal to the apparent width of half the diameter (which in this position will appear somewhat less than the real semi-diameter), also draw  $ci$  parallel to  $ab$  but less distant from the centre  $o$ .

Produce  $ob$  to  $x$  and make  $bx$  equal to  $ob$ . Draw  $oi$ ,  $og$ , then lines drawn from  $x$ , to  $e$  and  $f$ , will cut  $og$  and  $oi$  in two points, through which the curve may be described, making tangents with the straight lines at the points  $e$ ,  $b$ , and  $f$ . Being an overshot wheel the lower portion is not visible. Should, however, the entire wheel be seen, the lower points for the curve will be in the diagonals immediately beneath the others, as shown in the cut.

FIG 24.



The student may have recourse to similar means for drawing the circular arches of a stone

bridge. It seldom, however, happens that a bridge of this kind is a desirable object in a landscape, unless perhaps in the distance, or middle distance of the picture. Arches, however, are frequently found in association with the most picturesque material, and in combination with the most romantic features of nature, such, for instance, as that near Aberystwith, called the Devil's Bridge, and many others.

Some of the stone bridges in the lake districts of Cumberland and Westmoreland are extremely picturesque. They are of very rude construction, being in many cases formed only of loose

stones for the passage of sheep and herds of cattle over small streams; it is, however, from their very ruggedness that they derive their interest, surrounded as they frequently are by scenery of much grandeur. The cut below affords a specimen of this kind of simple and picturesque bridge; it is thrown over a small stream flowing into Wast Water, one of the most picturesque of the Cumberland lakes.

This subject of Fig. 26 is "Stockley Beck," in Cumberland, which, in combination with a portion of the mountainous district amid which it is situated, forms a passage of landscape scenery that in pictorial interest can scarcely be surpassed.

It is only in Wales, Scotland, and in the lake districts of England, that such combinations are met with; and this, and other similar sketches are introduced here, only to afford the student examples of this class of scenery, and to illustrate the selection and treatment of a sketch.

The rude bridge forming the subject of Fig. 25 crosses one of the streams that flows from Snowdon. It is near Beddgelert, and so picturesque is it from every point of view, that no sketcher goes into the neighborhood in which it is situated, without making a drawing of it, and scarcely a season passes without a picture of this bridge appearing in some one or other of the London exhibitions.

## ON THE CHOICE OF SUBJECT.

As the strict end of our instructions here is to instruct the sketcher to a facility in simply delineating objects and combinations of objects; it is desirable that it should be understood, that this is only the first step towards accomplishment in drawing from nature. An easy, rapid, and decided manner of sketching is to be acquired only by practice. It is an acquisition essential to excellence in all the other artistic qualities to which it serves as a basis; therefore, it were here altogether out of place to propose a consideration of color, manipulation, and all those questions of feeling and execution, which, brought forward at so early a period of progress, would only serve to divert the student from the attainment of the power of dealing with these effectively hereafter. These subjects are entertained in their proper places in the series to which this little book belongs.

It is, however, necessary that the sketcher be assisted in the choice of subject matter. The exercise of a little judgment in this will render his progress agreeable to himself, and his works presentable to others. To beginners, the great precept of one of the most accomplished of our living landscape painters, is to "study little bits," a precept which will apply equally to sketching and painting.

Among the subjects forming the wood-cuts, which illustrate these instructions, are many which might serve as initiatory essays; and others of various degrees of progress, even to compositions which might be worked up into drawings and paintings of infinite beauty. All artists have some peculiarity in their method of sketching, and rapid and broad sketches are frequently intelligible only to those who make them. One of the best qualities, however, of a sketch, is that it should not only refresh the memory of the artist, but should be intelligible to every one.

With a little education, the eye will discover material for study everywhere. London and its environs abound with subjects of picturesque beauty. Hampstead, Highgate, the banks and wharfs of the Thames even to the Nore; every suburban locality, and all the green lanes and commons with which they communicate, abound with material which may be wrought into pictures of the highest degree of interest. These are the localities which have contributed to form many of the best of our landscape painters, and so it is elsewhere; there is no spot in the country so entirely divested of picturesque qualification, as not to supply to the cultivated taste, subject matter for an interesting picture. In confirmation of this, it is only necessary to look round our exhibitions, to see numerous works of great beauty and interest, produced from materials extremely slight.

Having made himself master of the principles here laid down, the sketcher might select for commencement some single object, such as the quaint old gable in cut 20; a subject like this is sufficiently good to be drawn from various points of view, and it should be studied in such a manner, that at any subsequent period, a colored drawing might be made from it. Fig. 1, exemplifies a composition of lake and mountain scenery, in which the expression of the pencil is sufficient to show the relation of the objects. Through the middle distance to the fore-

FIG. 25.

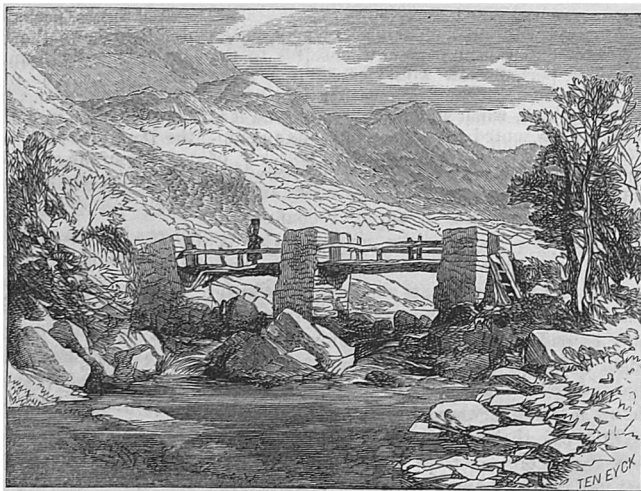
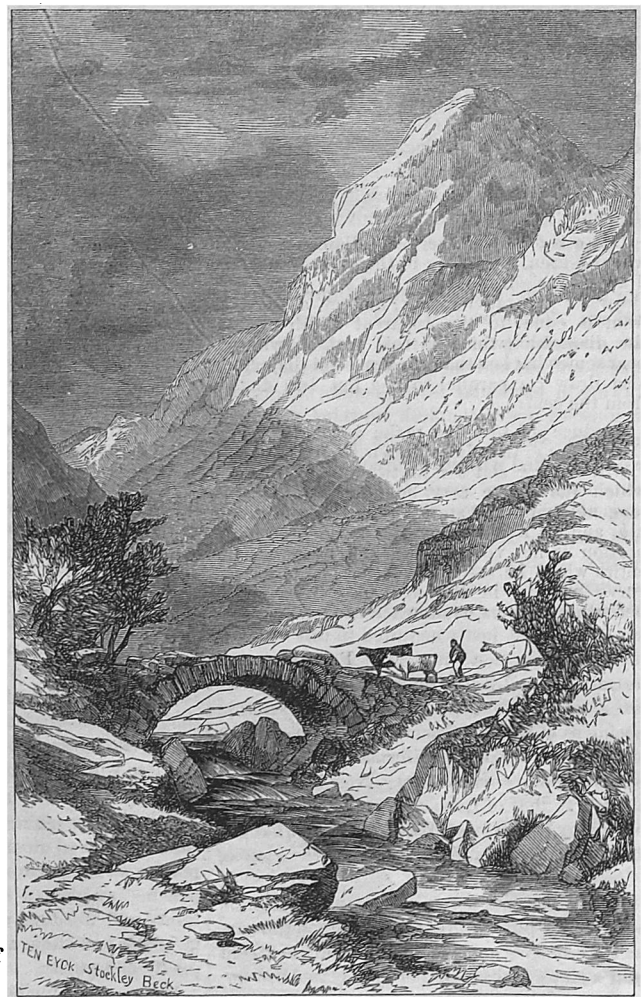


FIG. 26.



ground, the touch is gradually strengthened, and the most decided and darkest lines appear in the nearest parts of the view. The water is left nearly white. This sketch is as slight as it well can be, to be worked out into a subsequent finished picture. In Fig. 4, an extremely simple subject, a winding river with a boat, a few trees, and a distant spire—there is more than mere outline, but still no more than may be gracefully effected by the pencil, and in Fig. 5,

wherein the church tower is the prominent object, the place of the sun would afford the amount of shade, which gives force to the sketch. Fig. 26 is a very carefully studied sketch, which might be colored with little modification, according to its present distribution of light and shade.

In accordance with the principle which prescribes simple subjects to beginners, the student will do well to sketch some simple group, or single object. It frequently occurs that with objects of picturesque quality, there are associated others which do not harmonize with them. In such case, a point of view should be sought that would exclude the objectionable forms. Middle and remote distances afford facilities for the modification of objectionable forms, but a certain amount of practice will be necessary to qualify the student to deal successfully with these niceties.

#### COMPOSITION OF LINES AND FORMS.

Every production of art, of what genus soever it may be, is reducible to its elementary construction of lines and forms; and upon a skilful disposition of the picture. The essential spirit of composition is variety: but in order that the whole be with ease and pleasure to the spectator comprehended in one view, it is necessary that the entire circle of minor parts be so harmonized as to form one well-balanced whole, consisting of a few prominent masses or agroupments, which according to the principal law of composition must be diversified in magnitude and in form. One of these masses should be treated as the principal, and the others dependent and contributive: but it is necessary that they be distinct in appearance and place, although all coincident in the proposed sentiment. What form soever may be determined on, it is necessary to guard against a fixed regularity—an equality and repetition of parallel, rectilinear and circular forms—indeed whatever be the general outline of these masses, it must not be too regular nor too much broken; the continuity must rather be slightly indicated than absolutely insisted on. And in order that nothing be wanting, the various components should preserve an evident relation among themselves; they should be associated in such a manner that none should appear entirely detached, the larger masses broken and relieved by the minor and subordinate parts, showing a whole so well balanced that no one part could be abstracted without the deficiency being felt.

If we turn to Figure 26, and consider the dispositions observed in that composition, we shall see that the positions of the principal objects are not the result of mere chance, but they are brought into this combination from a particular point of view, which is determined as favorable in this case to picturesque composition. The principal features in the view are the bridge, the stream, and the mountain. By the emphasis with which the bridge is treated, it is brought forward to the eye as a principal object, but it does not, nevertheless, occupy the centre of the composition, nor does the stream flow in a direct course down the centre of the drawing, or the mountain rise to a cone equidistant from both sides. These dispositions are effected with a view to avoid that formality against which we have cautioned the learner. Again, with respect to the arch, it contrasts with the irregular shapes of the rocks and stones lying near it, and no two of these are of like form. The lines descriptive of the descent of the mountain, necessarily tend in one direction; but parallelism is avoided, and the lines are modified by light and shade. In artificial objects parallels necessarily occur, as in buildings of all kinds; but such lines and parts are rather indicated than harshly forced upon the eye, and by the aid of chiaroscuro they are reduced to breadth and harmony.

#### LIGHT AND SHADE.

In an outline sketch it is found that outline alone is inadequate to the representation of an



object in relief; it cannot give substance, nor define relative distances so as to maintain the objects in their proper places. We have urged the necessity of judicious selection of subject matter, and we have now to observe that how well soever the subject may compose, it is yet necessary that it be effective in its chiaroscuro; for it greatly depends upon the happy or unskillful distribution of the lights and darks, whether a composition appears confused and broken, or agreeably united into one harmonious whole. There are times when the most commonplace material may strike us as beautiful; and in a converse aspect, the most charming scenery may become void of interest. The matter-of-fact presentations of the breadth of a meridian light, and the same passages of landscape viewed under the shades of evening, affect the feelings very differently. In the latter there is a charm which operates upon minds the least susceptible of impression from the beauties of nature: and if it be necessary to cultivate a discrimination even with respect to degrees of the beautiful, how much more necessary is it to study to acquire the power of conferring importance on, and investing with interest, any slight subject matter which we may have to treat. This is, after all, the test of the master—the power of giving, by means of judicious light and shade, importance to comparatively insignificant matter. The general principle acted upon by all artists, is to dispose the lights and shades of their work in the manner best suited to the treatment they propose for their work. If we turn to cut 5, we find a dark mass reared against a light sky, and immediately supported by shaded objects of different degrees of depth, and repetitions of dark in the foreground; with very little change, the arrangement of light and shade might be adapted to a great variety of combinations.

The simplest form of effect is the opposition of two masses. If the subject be dark—as a building or a group of trees—it will be relieved by a light sky: if it be light, the sky will be darker. This simple opposition we mention in order to observe that in every pictorial composition it prevails in the great masses and throughout the details, but the principle is concealed in proportion as the work is successful. Every dark must be relieved by a light; and every light must tell against a dark: this is the law of natural chiaroscuro, and in art it is the principle of relief; but the contrasts must not seem harsh or artificial.

The forms of light and shade are subject to the same laws as those of objects: hence, if a subject be treated with a breadth of light, the principal mass must not regularly divide the composition either vertically or horizontally. If shade prevail in the picture, the same rule applies; but light or shade may be introduced at either side of the picture, occupying the entire plane, and diminishing to a point at the opposite extremity of the horizon.

In a light picture a simple and agreeable effect is produced by placing the principal dark or most substantial point on the right or the left in the foreground, and from this point approaching the base of the picture and the horizon with graduated tones broken and varied according to the kind of objects introduced.

The examples of light and shade here recommended are extremely simple; and a knowledge of them will prepare the student for an acquaintance with dispositions of greater complexity, of which it were beyond our intention in this brief essay to treat.

We here conclude the publication of the essay upon the art of sketching from Nature. There are three or four other works in the same series in which instructive information is given in the art of drawing landscapes in water colors—and also in the art of oil painting. We shall probably, at some future day, republish one or more of these works.

*Translated for the Bulletin.*

#### GLEANINGS FROM FRENCH JOURNALS.

##### PORTRAIT PAINTING.

A deplorable prejudice, the fruit of ignorance in the public, and of the indolence and carelessness of modern artists, causes portraiture now-a-days to be considered an inferior department of Art. I entertain a contrary opinion, and think that a portrait is one of the most difficult, and at the same time, most important works an Artist can attempt. But it ought, I confess, to be treated in a very superior manner. Can it be that the representation of the human countenance, and the sentiments and passions which agitate it, is not more interesting, and exacts no more extended observation, or profound knowledge, than that of the material and inanimate objects which compose a landscape or some genre picture in which the characters, for the most part, are little else than accessories? Is it not chiefly here that there must be made to shine forth that radiance of the soul—too fugitive and evanescent—to be easily seized? Certain am I that the Portraits of *TITIAN*, *PAUL VERONESE*, *BRONZINO*, *VANDYCK*, *RUBENS*, *RIGAUD*, and *LARGILLIERE* are worth as much, almost in respect to composition, as the more celebrated works of these Artists; for in addition to the talent they display, is the charm of making us familiarly acquainted with the distinguished men and women whom their pencils have handed down to posterity. Modern portraiture is certainly ungratifying and wearisome. This is the fault of the painters themselves, even those who have the highest reputations. In this department, they have done nothing which approaches the ancients. Their work is dead, dry, cold, inelegant, resembling for the most part, ill-colored images cut out and pasted on the canvas. The drawing in particular is neglected. There are no muscles under the flesh, no veins, no blood under the skin. The hands are of wood or pasteboard, and without appreciable forms. In going back to an epoch not very remote, the reign of *Louis XV.*, we find *NATTIER*, the *VANLOOS*, *TOCQUE*, *CHARDIN*, *AVED*, *DROUVAIS*, *GREUZE*, *MADAME LEBRUN*, and others who left us excellent portraits. Under the Empire, *PRUDHON* and *GROS* continued the renown which our School had justly acquired in this branch. But the Restoration witnessed the extinction of Portraiture, and it was obliged to employ *LAWRENCE*, an Englishman, to obtain presentable specimens of its official personages. Since then, it is *M. WINTERHALTER*, a German, who takes all the aristocratic commissions. Now this Artist's talent is to that of *LAWRENCE* what *WATTEAU* of *Lille*, is to *WATTEAU* of *Valenciennes*—what the gleaming of a poor little light is to the glow of a fine sunset.

A common-place portrait painter does nothing more than to put features together upon the canvas. An artist of genius traces with an intelligent hand a man's entire moral or intellectual history. A portrait-painter needs something more than a good eye. He will never produce a work of any value beyond that of the mere dexterity of execution, if he is not a profound observer, learned physiologist, and philosopher enough even to penetrate the conscience of his model, and fasten upon the features the true movement which the habits of thought, of feeling, or of passion, have stamped there with the mysterious seal of their passage. This is the rea-

son why some portraits, taken from memory or scratched off by a few strokes of the lead pencil, make a livelier impression on the spectator than those in which an artist has wearied his model by a long sitting. I remember what a celebrated miniature painter, the late *M. Jacques*, told me one day. He said that having worked under *Lawrence*, he had caught some secrets from that great man. *Lawrence* never had his sitters in his atelier: he placed them in an adjoining parlor in company with one or two persons, and asked them to converse without any attention to his proceedings. He came to the door now and then, and caught their characteristic expressions almost without their knowledge. It was thus, doubtless, he was able to produce such fine and delicate resemblances.

—It is not always well to paint the whole truth, and although sincerity is extremely praiseworthy, we can scarcely approve the somewhat brutal frankness of an old artist, who, while making the portrait of a lady whose face was slightly broken out, took considerable trouble to reproduce all the pimples that he saw before him. "My dear sir," said the lady, "you are not aware of what you are about. You are painting my pimples—they are merely accidental—they make no part of my face." "Bon, bon, madame," replied he, "if you hadn't these, you would have others."

*CASANOVA*, in his memoirs, thus describes *NATTIER*, the portrait-painter to the Court, whom he knew in Paris in the year 1750. This great Artist was then eighty years old, and in spite of his advanced age, seemed to preserve his fine talents unimpaired. He painted the portrait of an ugly woman, so that the resemblance was perfect, and yet notwithstanding that, those who had only seen her portrait considered her to be beautiful. The most careful examination could detect no infidelity in the likeness. But an imperceptible something had given to the *ensemble* a real although undefinable beauty. Whence came this magic? I asked him the question myself one day just after he had finished two ugly ladies of the Royal family, who on his canvas had the air of two *Aspasias*. He answered me: "It is a magic that the God of Taste transports from my mind into my brushes. It is that divinity of beauty which all the world adores, and nobody can define, because nobody knows in what it consists. All this shows how delicate in reality is the gradation that exists between ugliness and beauty. That gradation, however, seems immense and startling to those who have no knowledge of our Art."

##### COLOR.

Generally speaking the harmony of a composition will be so much the more durable in proportion as the painter has felt confidence in his pencil, has planted his touches with more certainty and freedom, worked over and *tortured* his color less often, and used it with more simplicity and purity.

We see some modern paintings that lose their harmony in a very little time, while there are old works which preserve their freshness, unity and vigor for centuries. This advantage seems to me to be the result of the handling rather than the quality of the pigments.

Nothing in a painting speaks with so much force as true color. It speaks to the ignorant as well as the learned. A half-connoisseur will pass on without stopping before a *chef-d'œuvre*